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AUTHOR Ball, Edward H.
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ABSTRACT

Approximately 1200 students in first, second, and sixth grade participated in prepublication trials of selected materials from the Harper & Row "Reading Basics Plus" reading program. Students were tested before and after the two-week instructional period on the skills taught by the experimental materials. Information on such other facets of the program as length of lessons, student reaction to text selections, and teacher reaction to the various components was also collected. Results were interpreted as indicating that the desired learning of reading skills was taking place. No major weaknesses in the skills or comprehension material were revealed, and no major revision of the material was made. Teacher reactions were generally positive, but indicated a need for further guidance about lesson length and about techniques to use with slow or superior students. (AA)

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Report of Phase II (Skills) Prepublication Learner Verification of

READING BASICS PLUS

A Basic Reading Program Published by

Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

October 1975

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Prepared by:

Edward H. Ball
Director of Research
Marketing Services
School Department

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INTRODUCTION

Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., is publishing a developmental reading program in 1976 called *Reading Basics Plus*. Acting as contributors to this program are Dolores R. Amato, A. Dickson Carroll, Cherie A. Clodfelter, Lynette Saine Gaines, Eric P. Hamp, Phillip L. Harris, Joseph A. Lucero, and Mattie Claybrook Williams. The program spans the traditional grades of kindergarten through sixth grade in a series of six levels. In final published form, *Reading Basics Plus* consists of an integrated set of texts, workbooks, duplicating masters, word cards, charts, and teacher's guide books. Other Harper & Row publications supplement but are not part of the developmental-reading sequence of *Reading Basics Plus*.

This second phase of prepublication learner verification was designed to check on the skills-teaching techniques used in the program and to provide our contributors and editors with feedback on the efficacy of those techniques. At the same time, information on other facets of the program such as the length of lessons, student reaction to text selections, and teacher reaction to the various components was collected.

Teachers and their students in schools located around the country were provided with excerpts from *Reading Basics Plus* which took approximately two weeks work to complete. Students were tested on the appropriate skills both before and after the two-week instructional period. Changes in the student's proficiency were noted with improvements being considered as a result of the intervening material. Lack of improvement indicated areas of possible revision.

THE SAMPLE

To provide a national sample Harper & Row representatives enlisted the aid of 63 teachers in a total of 45 schools. These teachers used *Reading Basics Plus* material with about 1200 students or an average of about 19 students per classroom. Teachers taught the material to different size groups ranging from their whole class to a small part of that class.

Geographically, the sample involved schools from 17 different states. All sections of the country were represented in the sample. Trial schools were located in Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Ohic, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, and Washington. Urban, suburban, and rural communities were also evident in the sample and some data was differentiated on that basis.

THE MATERIALS

Schools were provided with *Reading Basics Plus* prepublication materials from Level B (which is roughly equivalent to traditional second grade) and Level F (which is roughly equivalent to sixth grade). Level B material went to second grade classrooms and a limited number of first grades. Level F material was provided to sixth grade rooms.

Each sixth grade room was given sufficient copies for each child of a skills pre-test, a student booklet, five sheets (printed on both sides) reproducing workbook pages, three sheets (printed on one side) reproducing

duplicating master pages, and a skills and comprehension post-test. The skills pre- and post-test were identical and covered three skills taught in the lessons: the meaning of certain prefixes; the identification of nouns, verbs or adjectives in sentences; and the identification of sentences as examples of either simile or metaphor. The student booklet was a one-color reproduction of 30 pages from the *Reading Basics Plus* Level F textbook *Time and Tigers*. In the booklet was an article, a story, and a 3-page instructional section on simile and metaphor. The booklet also contained the necessary excerpts from the glossary that were relevant to the other material in the booklet. The workbook and duplicating master materials were typewritten and then reproduced without any art in place. The post-test also contained some material to test the students' comprehension of what they had read in the student booklet and a rating and comment section where the students could react to the article and story.

Each second and first grade classroom was given sufficient copies for each child of a two-part skills pre-test, a student booklet, seven sheets (printed on both sides) reproducing workbook pages, four sheets (printed on one side) reproducing duplicating master pages, a four-part comprehension test, and a two-part skills post-test. The two-part skills pre- and post-tests were the same. Part A tested the sound and letter relationship of the initial, medial, and final vowel sound [ou]ow, and the sentence building and analysis skill dealing with suffixes -er, and -y. Part B tested the sound and letter relationship of the initial clusters [sw]sw, [pl]pl and the sound and letter relationship of the initial and medial vowels [ou]ou, and [ō]oa.

The student booklet was a one-color reproduction of 24 pages from the *Reading Basics Plus* Level B textbook, *Pets and Promises*. In the booklet were two stories, an article about hibernation, and a three-page instructional section on map reading. In addition the booklet began with a two-page "Words You Can Read" section which is both a device for introducing vocabulary and a word reference for the student. The workbook and duplicating master materials were type-set and contained line drawings but no four-color reproductions.

Each of the four comprehension tests were given after the work on the specific story, article, or instructional section was completed. First and second grade students were not asked to rate the material they read.

All first, second, and sixth grade teachers were provided with typewritten teacher edition materials for the selections taught. At the end of the trial period, all participating teachers were asked to score the pre- and post-tests and the comprehension test material in a standard manner; to provide a limited amount of background information about class size, programs used, etc.; and to rate different aspects of their experience with the trial material on a five-level scale from excellent to unacceptable.

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Level B Material

The second grade material was tried in first and second grade classrooms during the second semester of the 1974-1975 school year. As the material was from a section of the program intended for normal use during the early

part of a school year, we requested the help of some first grade classes that would be capable of handling early second grade materials.

Charts 1 and 2, which follow, show the results of the pre- and post-tests given to first and second grade students respectively. (See the section of this report on Materials for a description of the test contents.) In both cases the results indicated a statistically significant improvement with the difference between mean scores being larger with the first grade students.

The lack of a normal distribution of the pre-test scores with the shifting of the curve to the right indicates the initial test was somewhat easy. However, the test was of sufficient difficulty to provide positive evidence of the student's learning.

Chart 3, which follows Charts 1 and 2, presents the scores first and second grade children made on the four comprehension tests. The comprehension tests checked students on areas covered in the instructional program, like "main idea," "conclusion," and "sequence." The sequence questions in Test D caused the different pattern of scores. The students seemed generally successful on these tests with no striking differences between selections.

Chart I

1st grade Reading
Pre- and Post-Test results

	Pre-	Post-
Mean	83.09	88.82
S.D.	18.57	13.70
# of students	110	110

z = 2.60
significant at the .01 level

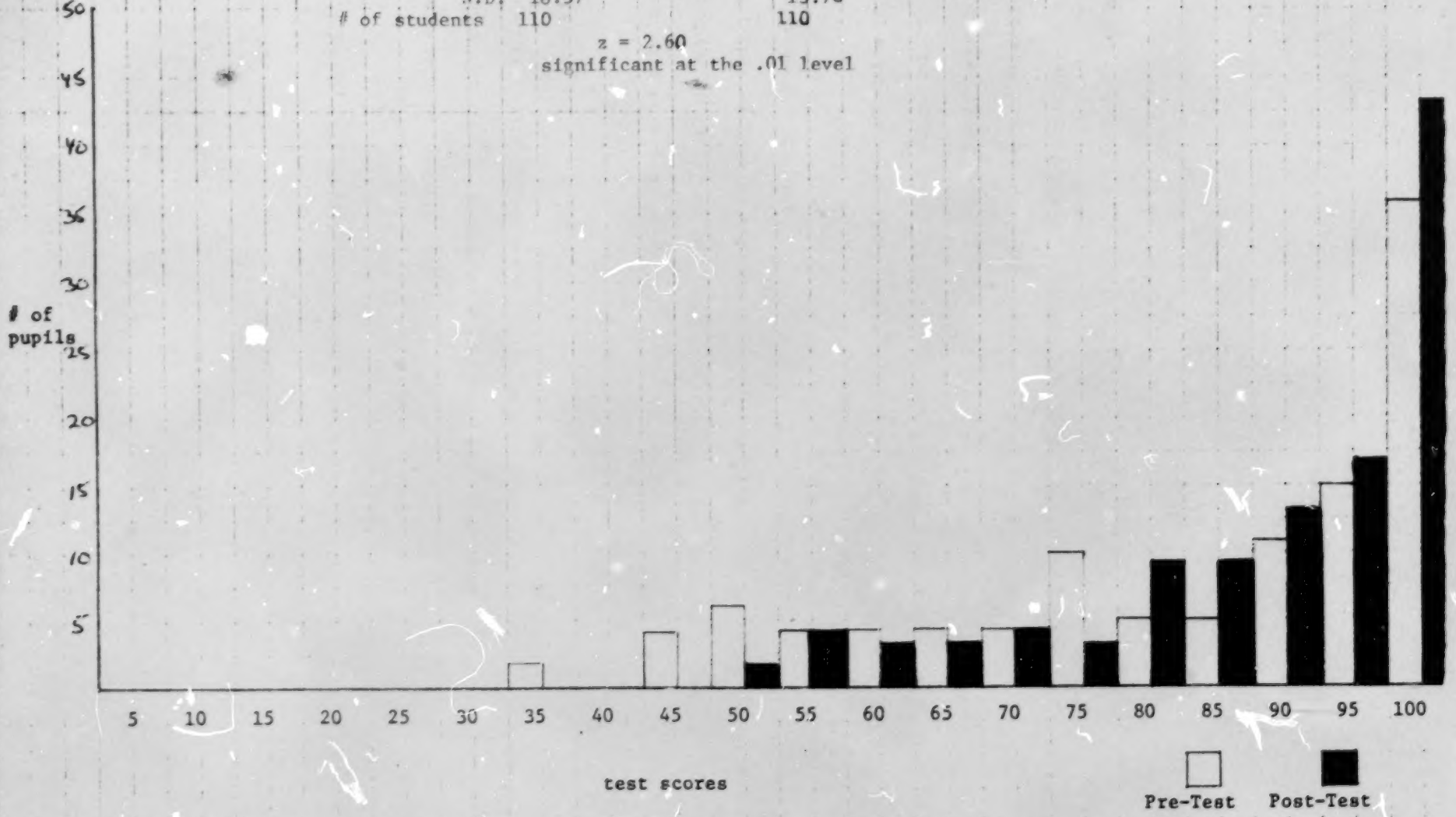


Chart 2

2nd grade Reading
Pre- and Post-Test results

	Pre-	Post-
Mean	86.43	91.34
S.D.	14.49	13.02
# of students	399	399

z= 5.03
significant at the .01 level

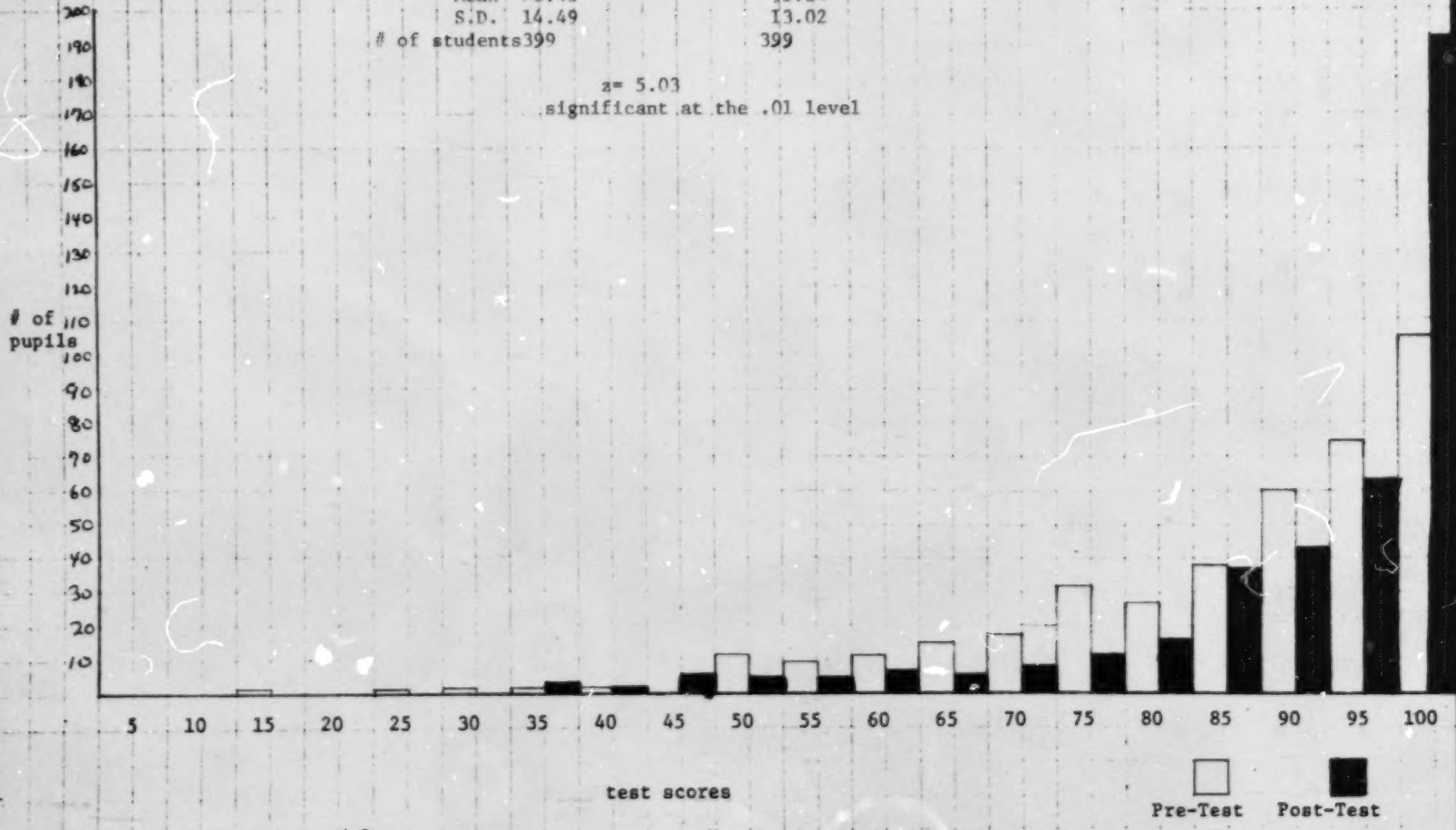
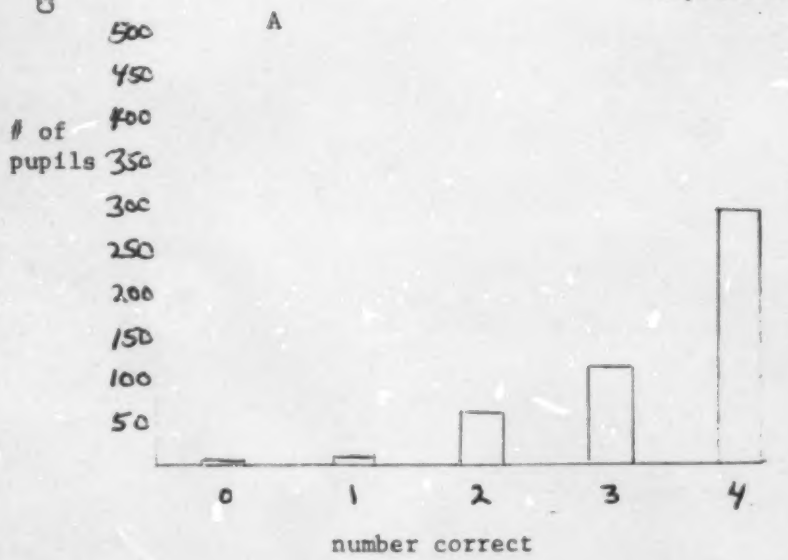
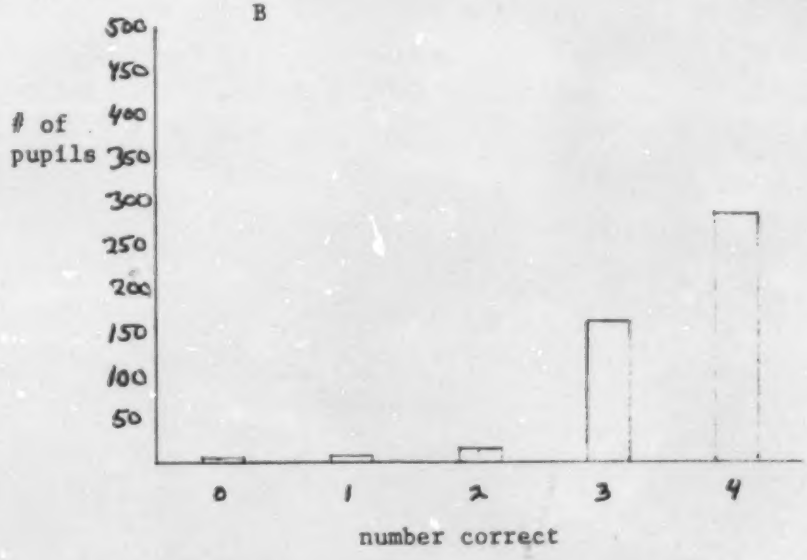
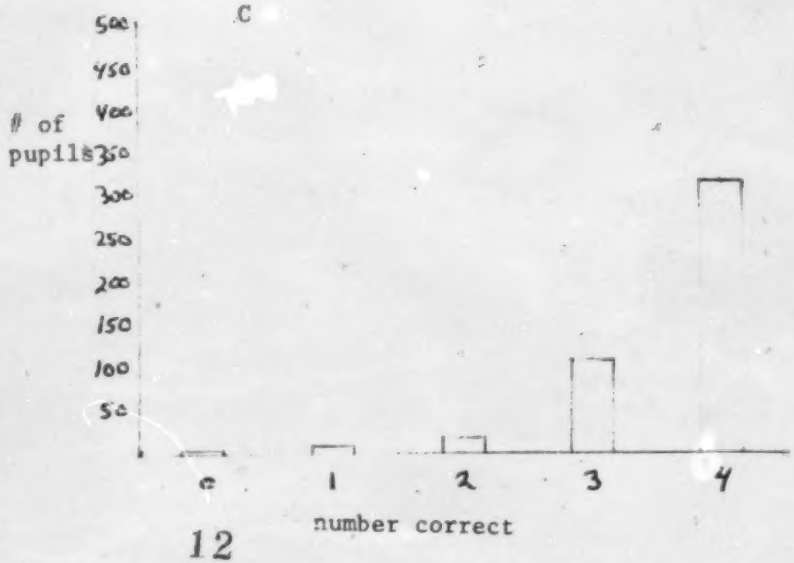


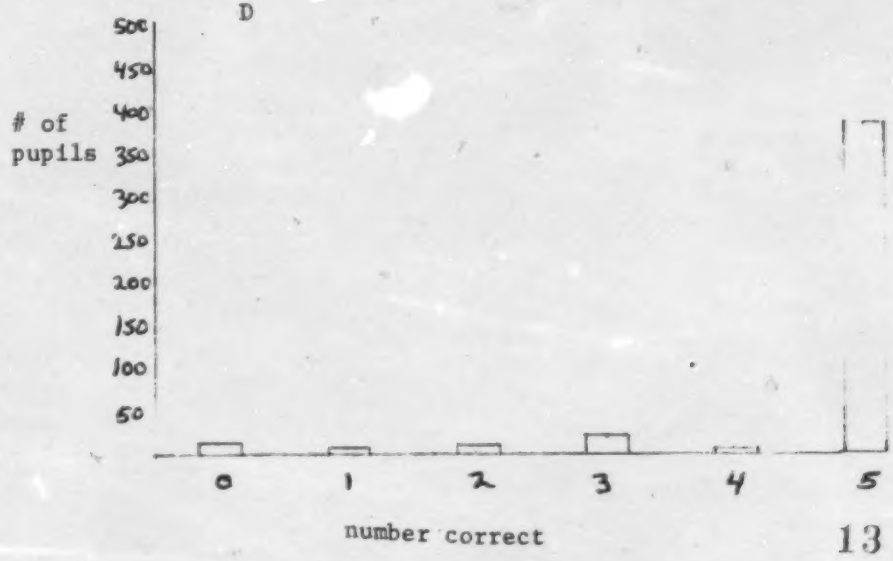
Chart 3 -8-

2nd grade Reading (Level B)
1st & 2nd grade classes combined
Comprehension Tests A - D









As there were so few teachers at the first grade level, their ratings were put with those of the second grade teachers. In both cases the teachers were rating the same Level B material. The thirteen parts of Chart 4, which follows, indicate the dimensions the teachers rated (they were given no more information than the simple heading) and the ratings given. Each teacher was asked to note each dimension on the 1 to 5 scale. The teachers were evaluating the prepublication materials they had at hand and not the final program. It may be noted that in all cases the greatest number of ratings are at the average and good levels, and in 8 out of 13 cases the most frequent rating is good.

The strong ratings given to the heading "For Average Pupils" and the slightly weaker ratings given "For the Slow Pupils" and "For Superior Pupils" may be an indication that the trial material is at the correct (or average) level of difficulty. In full classroom use, *Reading Basics Plus* will be supported with other materials and techniques for working with slow and superior students.

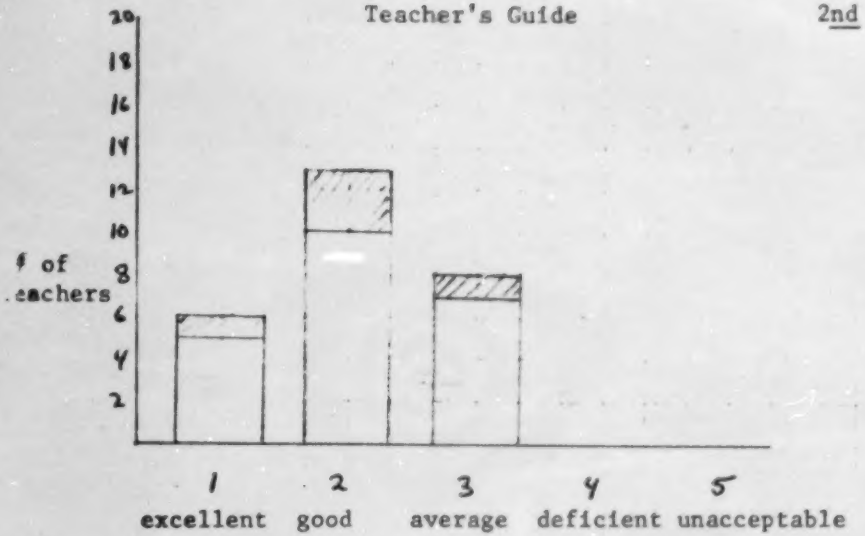
Also pleasing to the contributors and editors is the high "Overall Effectiveness" rating given the Level B materials by trial teachers. It may be surmised that all participating teachers found the Level B selection an effective tool in teaching reading skills since no one rated it deficient or unacceptable.

-10-
Chart

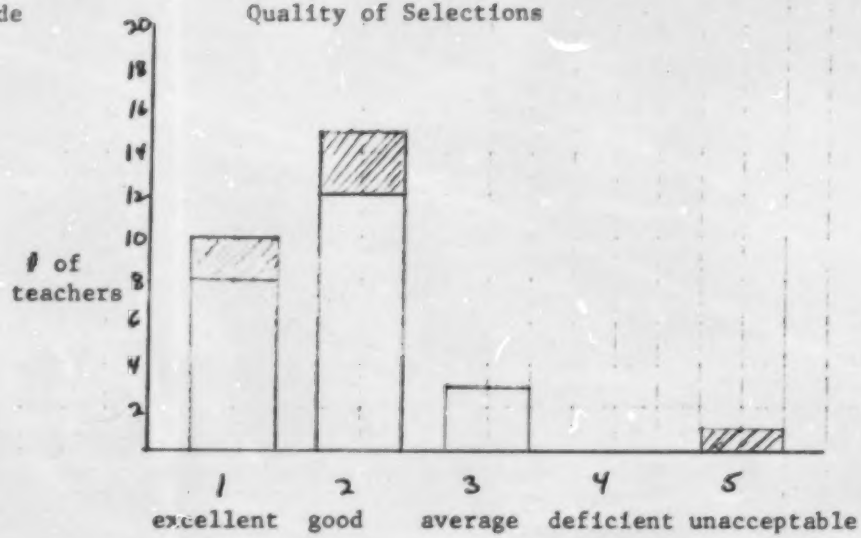
Teacher Evaluation

2nd grade

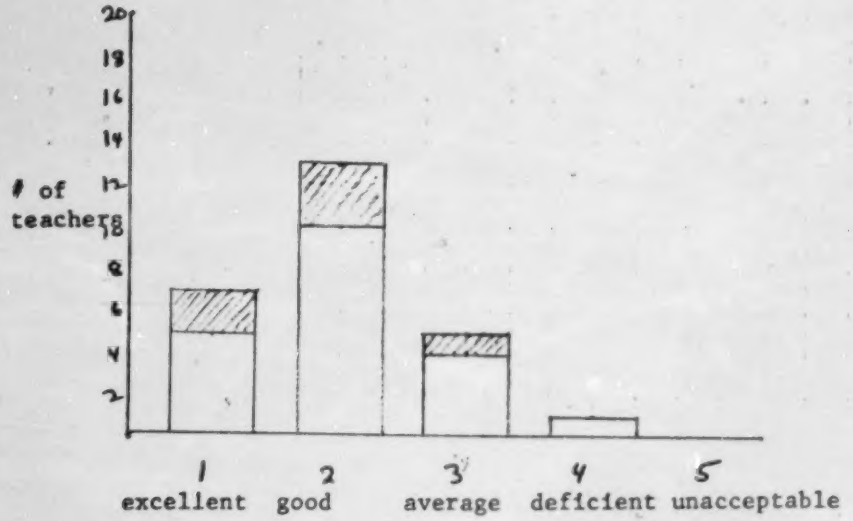
Teacher's Guide



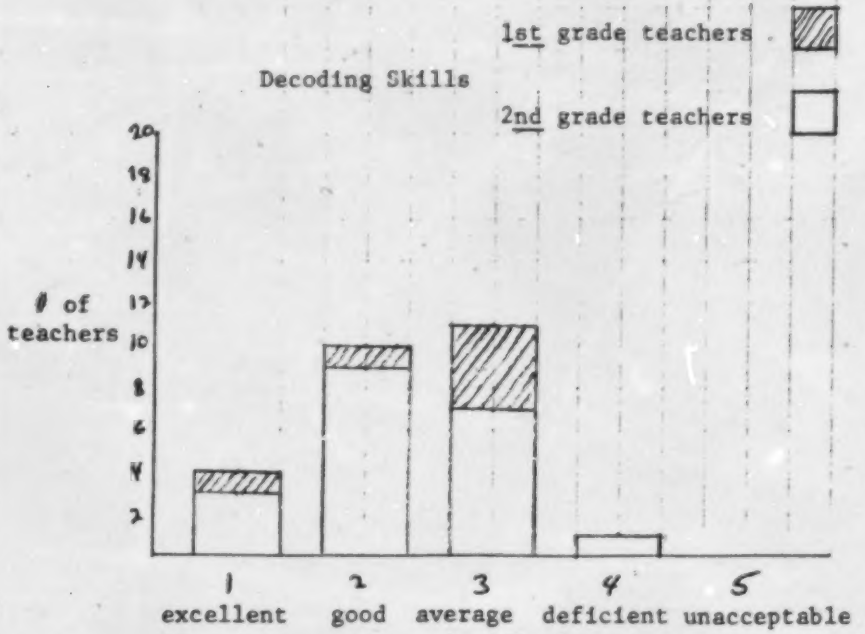
Quality of Selections



Pupil Interest

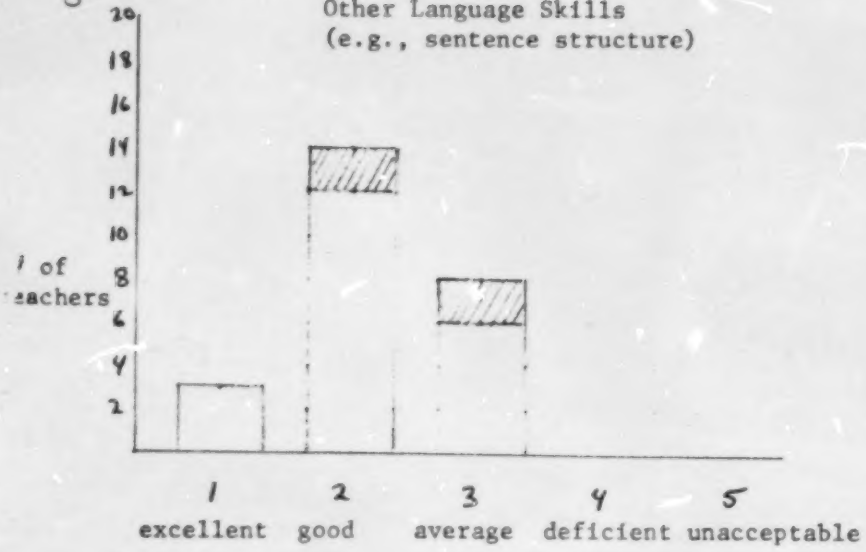


Decoding Skills

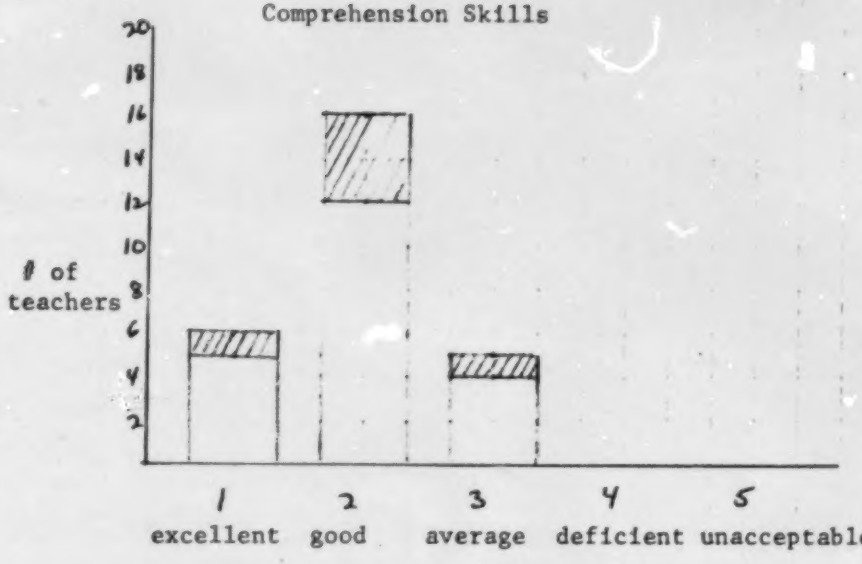


2nd grade
Teacher Evaluation

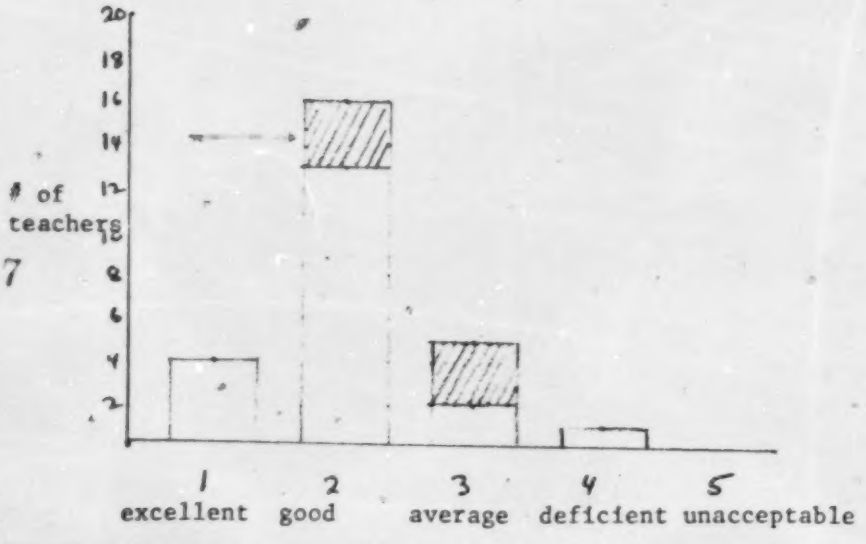
Other Language Skills
(e.g., sentence structure)



Comprehension Skills



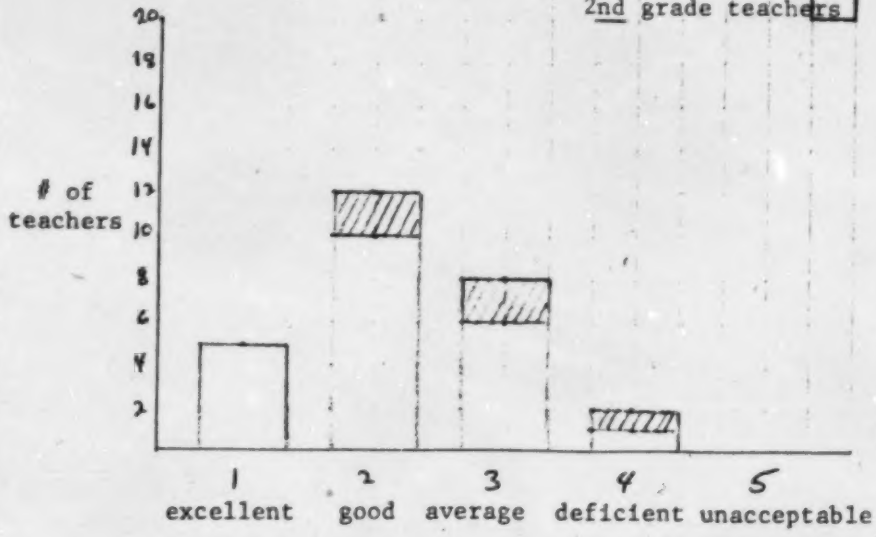
Study Skills



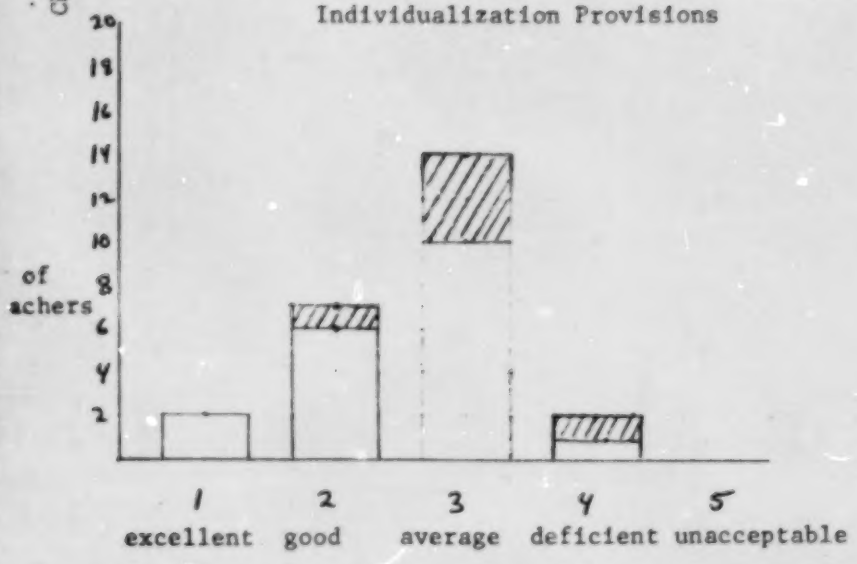
Practice Activities

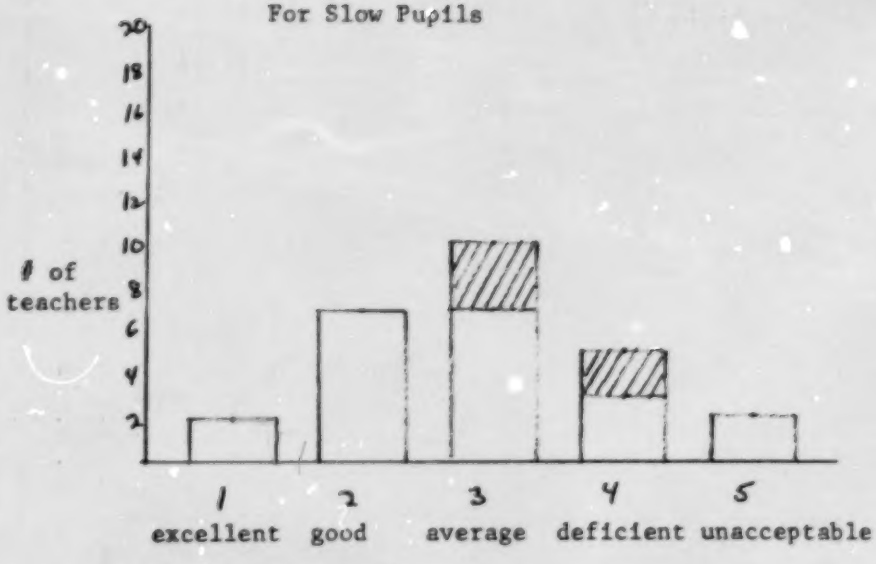
1st grade teachers

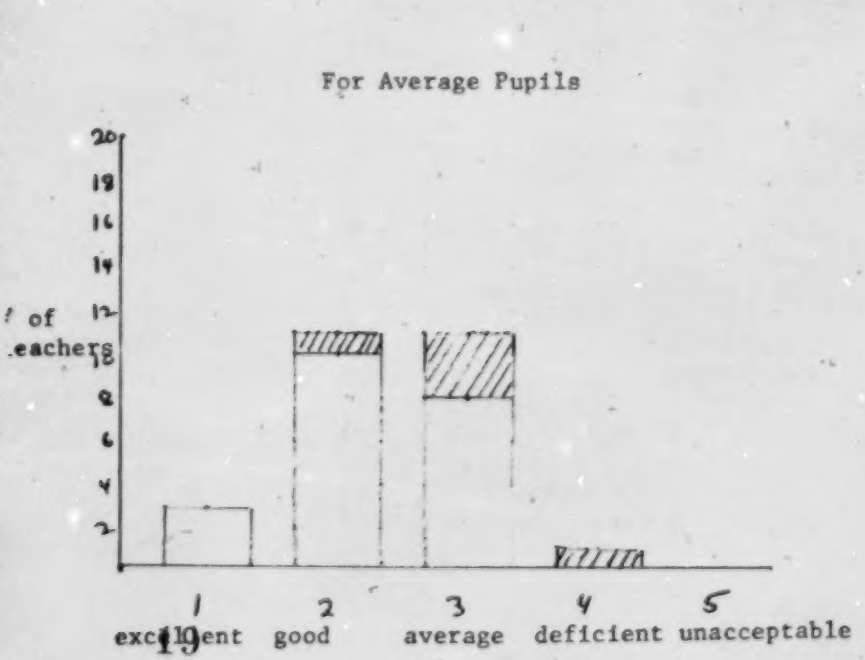
2nd grade teachers

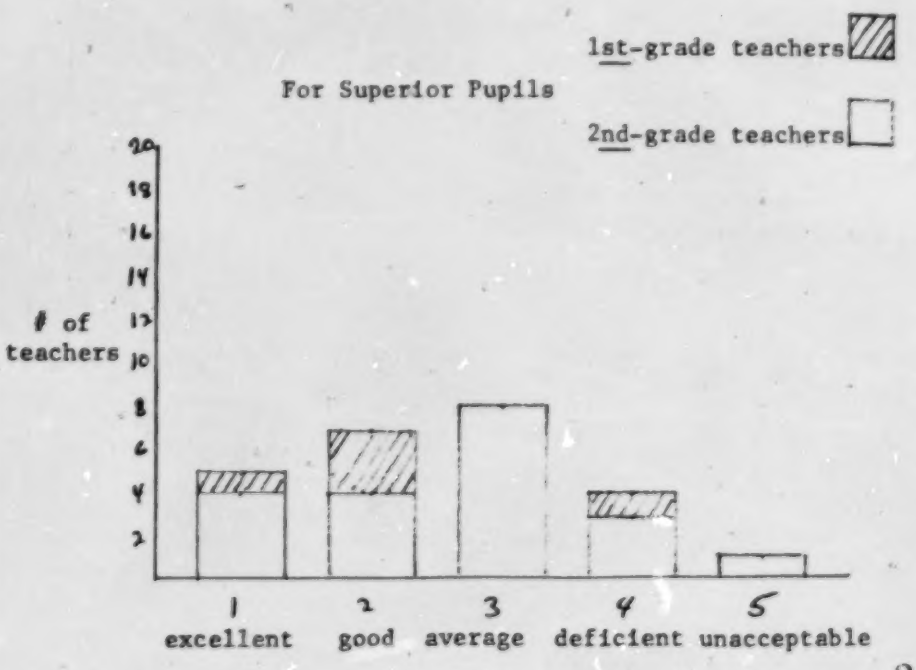


2nd grade
Teacher Evaluation





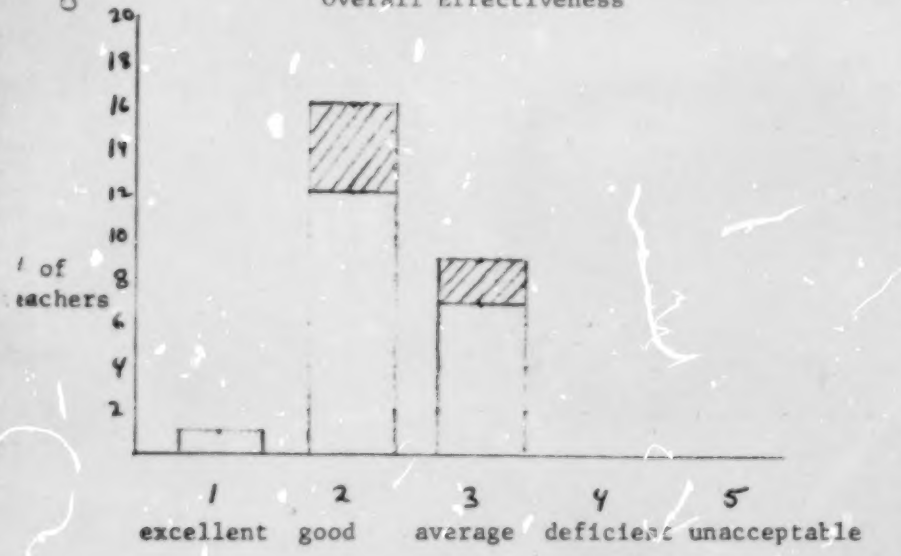


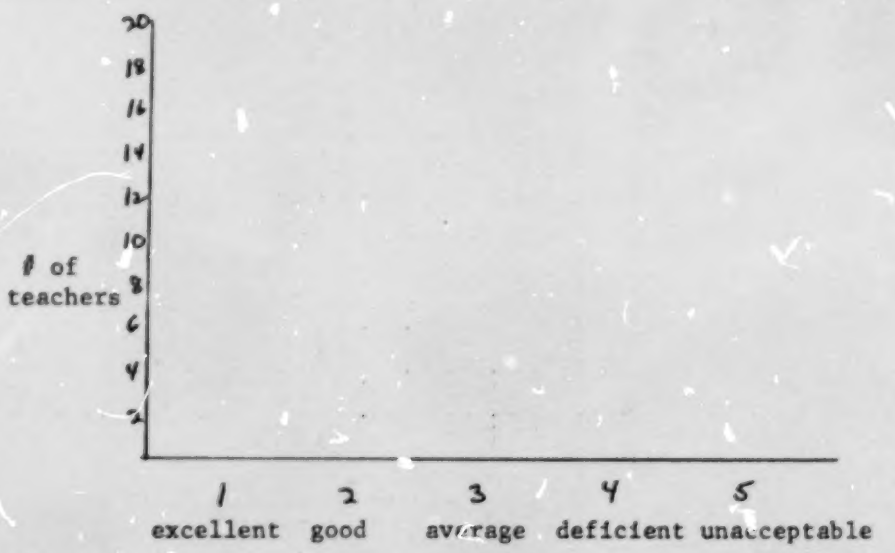


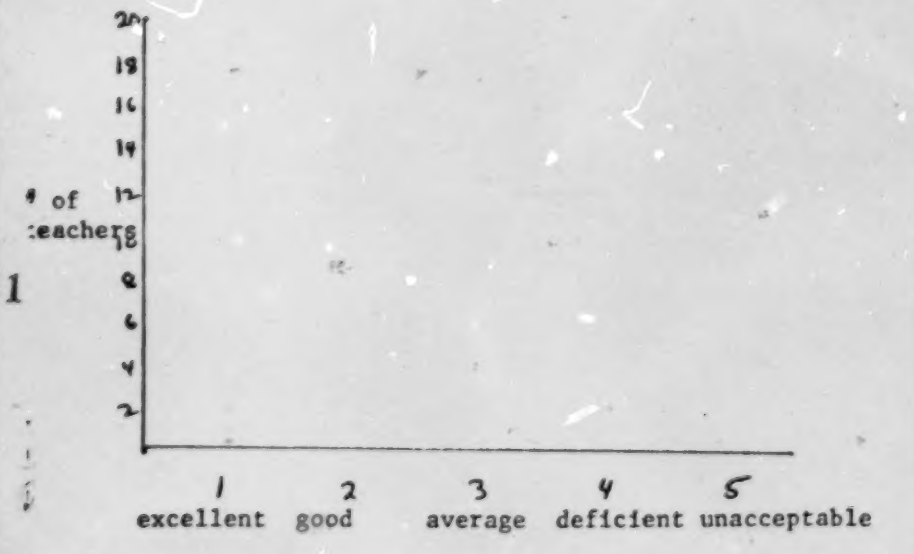
-13-
Chart 4

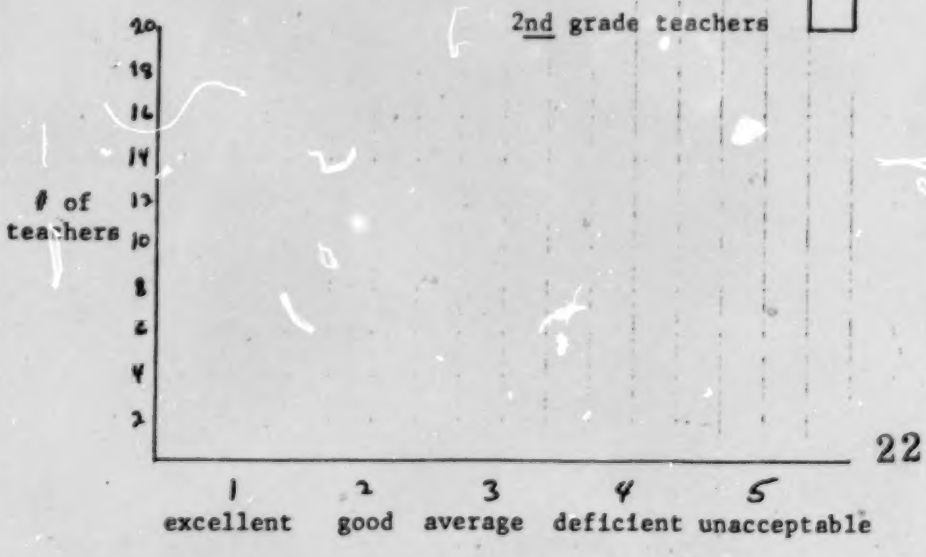
2nd grade
Teacher Evaluation

Overall Effectiveness









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Level F Material

The sixth grade material was also used during the second semester of the 1974-1975 school year. The pre-test distribution of scores for the Level F skill test is a closer-to-"normal" curve than that of the Level B pre-test (see Chart 5, which follows). The post-test again shows a statistically significant improvement in scores with the medial scores changing more than 14 points or a difference of almost three questions on the 20-item test. (See the section of this report on Materials for a description of the skill areas covered by this test.)

Chart 6, which follows Chart 5, illustrates the results of the Level F comprehension test. This test was administered after the entire trial instruction period was over and yet the students were able to do well on it.

Level F students were asked to rate the story and article they read. (See Chart 7, which follows Chart 6.) While "When Kids Have Something to Say" rated higher than the story, it is evident that both received a favorable reception from the children. This form of rating was used much more extensively in Phase I of the Learner Verification Trials of *Reading Basics Plus*.

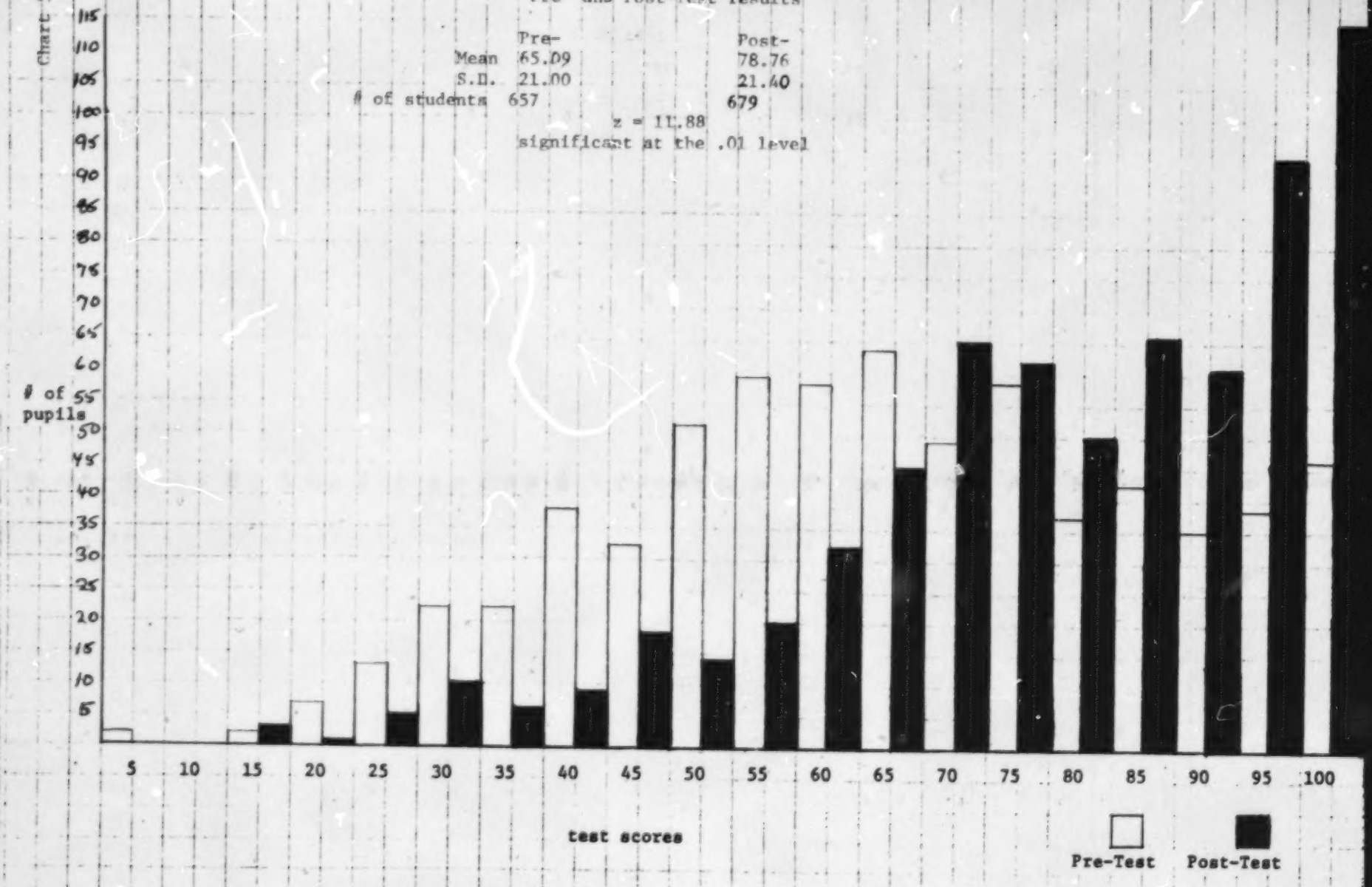
Teachers rated the Level F materials in a manner similar to the Level B teachers. One additional category was added (Glossary Usefulness) as glossary material is provided at this level. Decoding skills in Level B

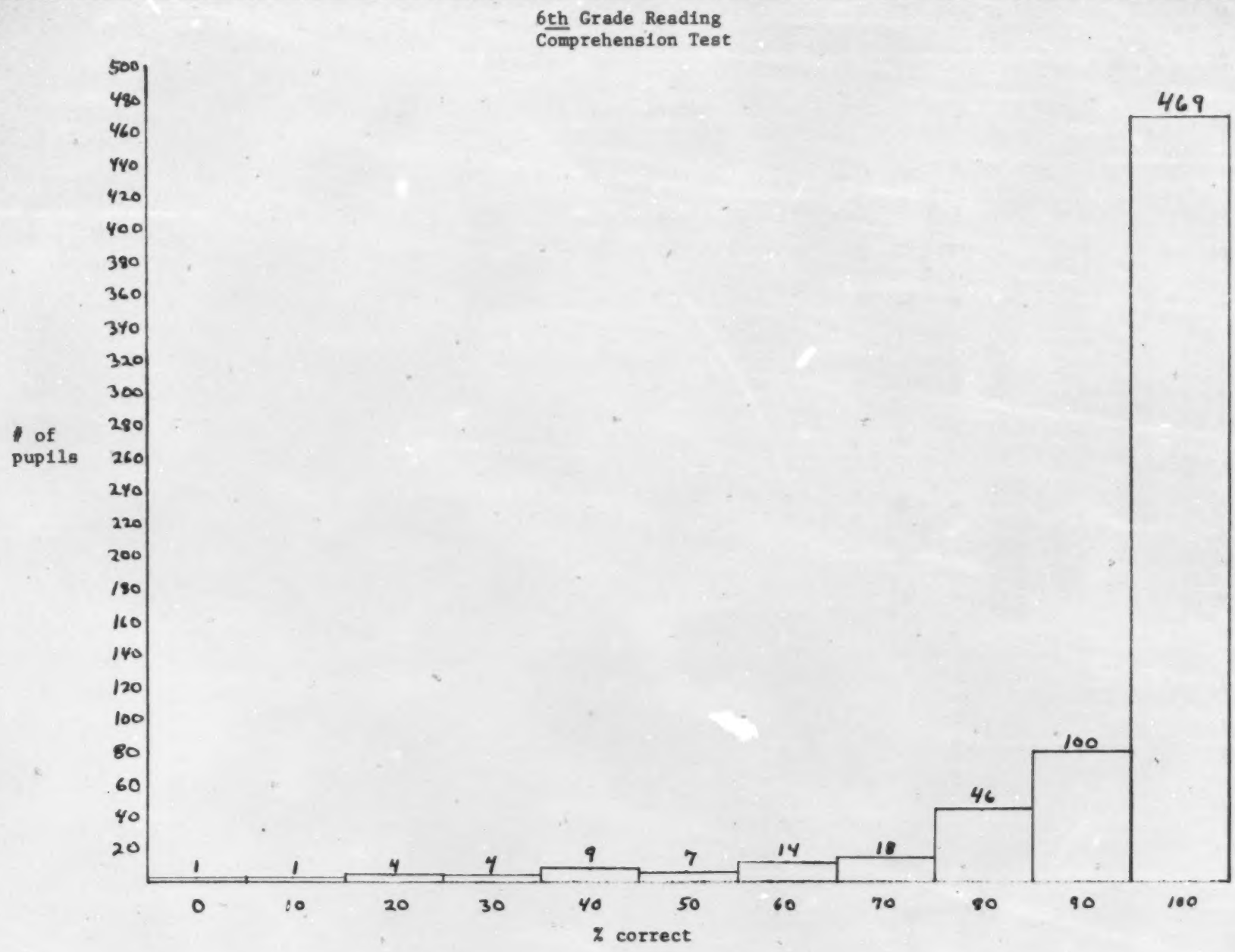
Chart 5 -11

6th grade Reading
Pre- and Post-Test results

	Pre-	Post-
Mean	65.09	78.76
S.D.	21.00	21.40
# of students	657	679

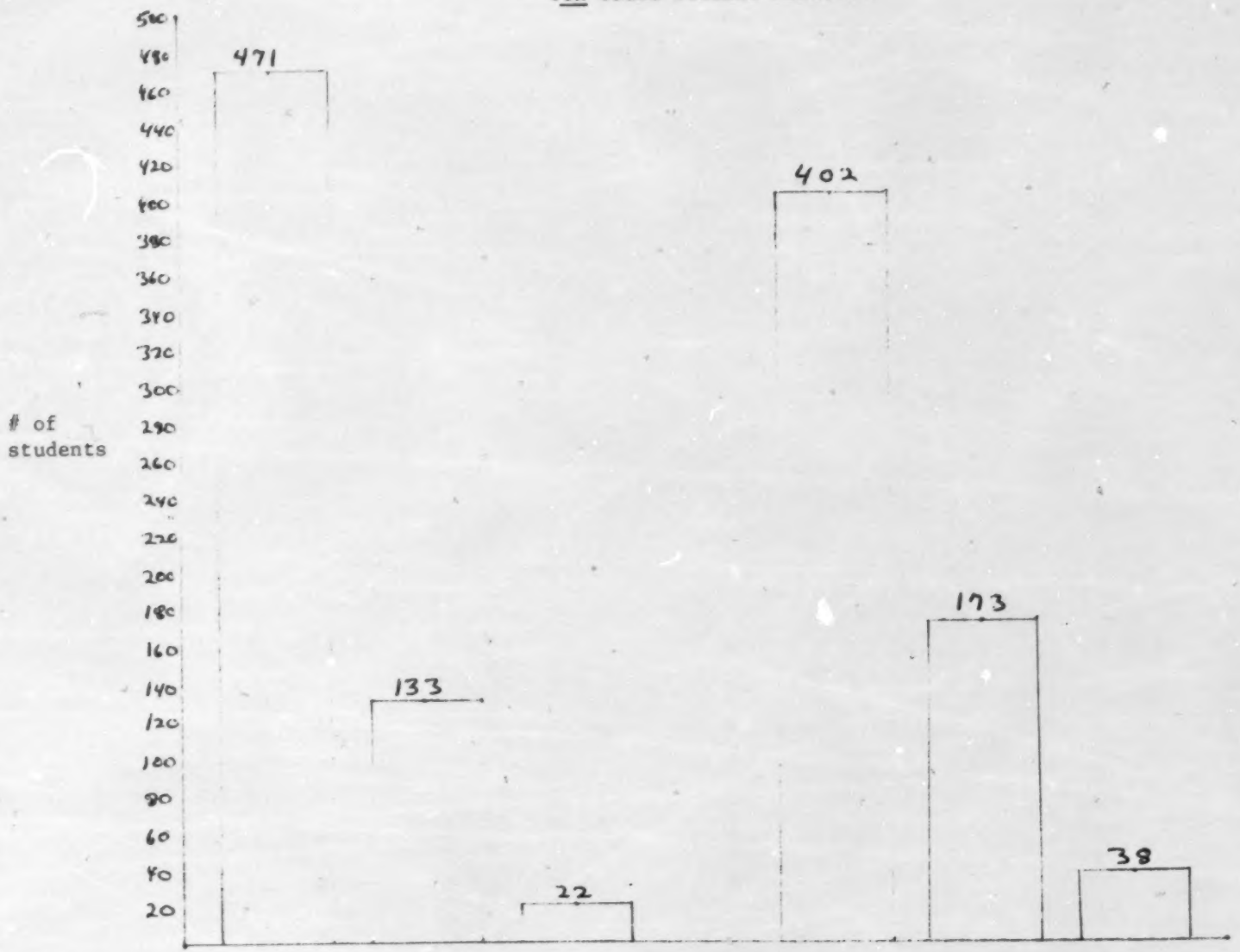
z = 11.88
significant at the .01 level




6th Grade Reading
Comprehension Test
# of pupils
500
480
460
440
420
400
380
360
340
320
300
280
260
240
220
200
180
160
140
120
100
80
60
40
20
1
1
4
4
9
7
14
18
46
100
469
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
100
% correct

-17-
Chart 7

6th Grade Student Reaction

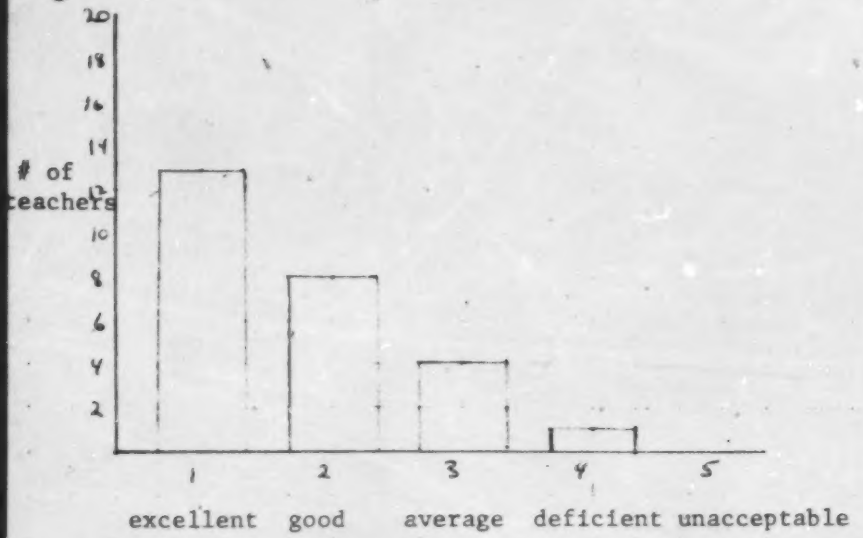


are similar to Word-Attack in Level F. The histograms on Chart 8, which follows, indicate the teachers' evaluation. The results are similar to the ratings of the Level B teachers. Most responses are in the average-good-excellent area. Glossary Usefulness seems to be well rated. "For Slow Pupils" received an almost perfectly average response with normal distribution, while "For Average Pupils" and "For Superior Pupils" were rated most often in the good or excellent areas. This may indicate that the bare skeleton program as used in these trials has, by itself, a broader range of application than the primary materials. Since intermediate level classes generally have a broader range of individual differences, this would be a felicitous situation. It should also be noted that the typical "Overall Effectiveness" rating for the Level F material was Good.

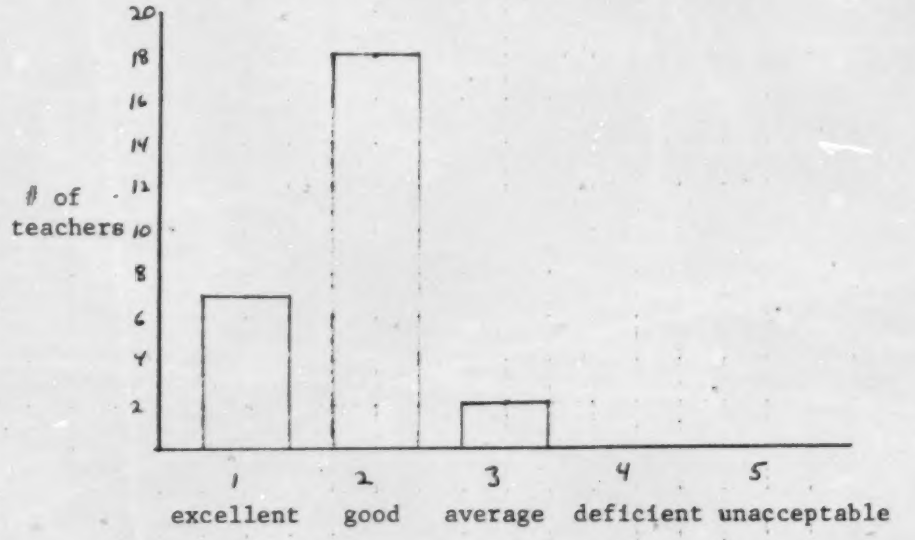
With the Level F results it was possible to identify a group of seven situations in which the change in skills scores was considerably larger than the norm and three where the change in scores was relatively small. The seven large-change classes were all from towns of over 100,000 inhabitants with two exceptions. Those two exceptions were located in urban megalopolis areas. The mean scores of these classes tended to start lower and finish lower than the typical class. The students in the large improvement group demonstrated no discernible difference on the comprehension test and rated the stories in a manner similar to the whole group. Of the seven teachers involved, only one indicated that the length of the lesson as described in the teacher materials was wrong (too long).

Teacher Evaluation
6th grade

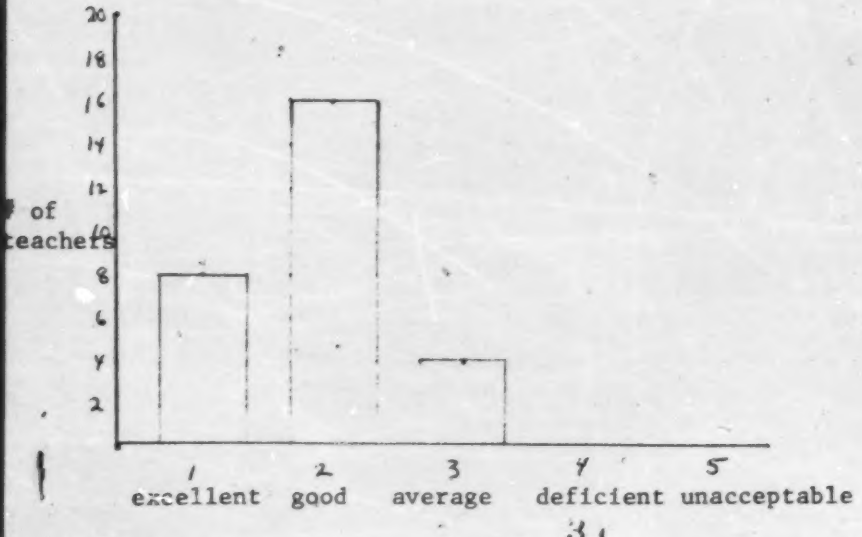
Teacher's Guide



Quality of Selections



Pupil Interest



Word-Attack Skills

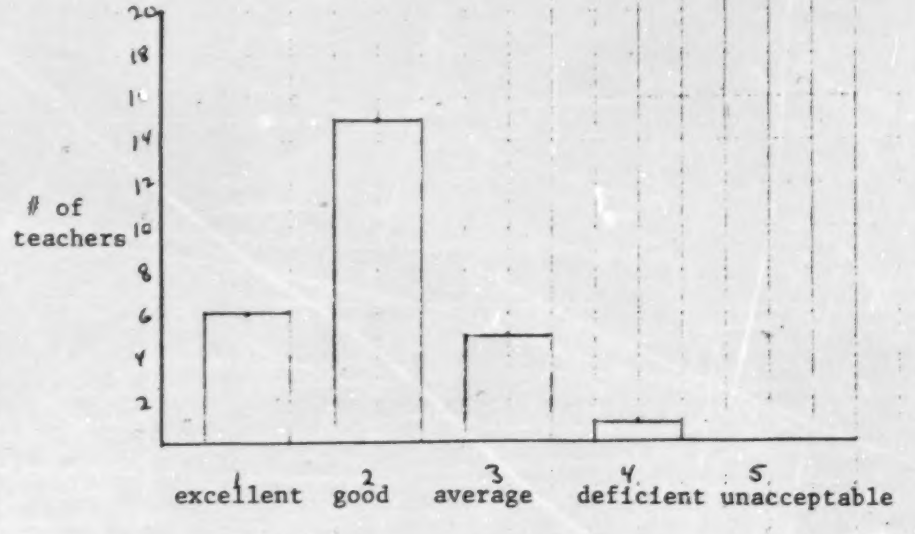


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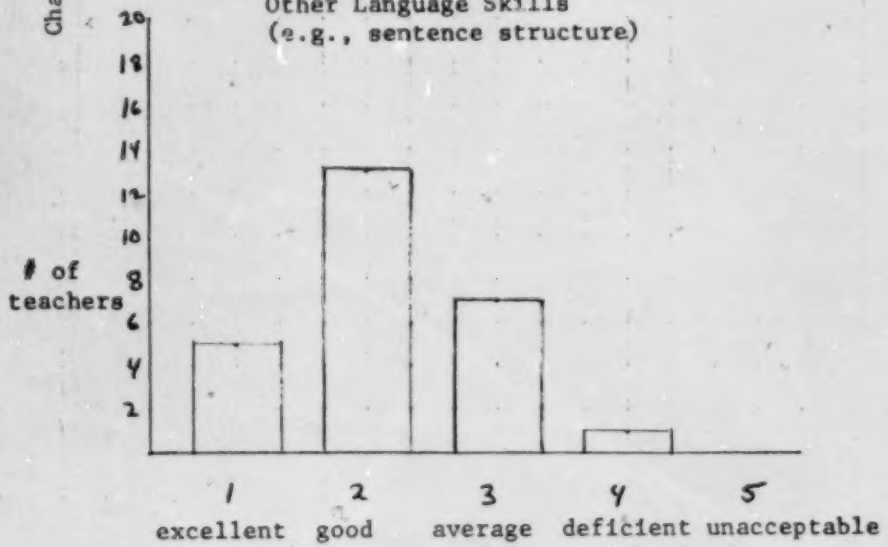
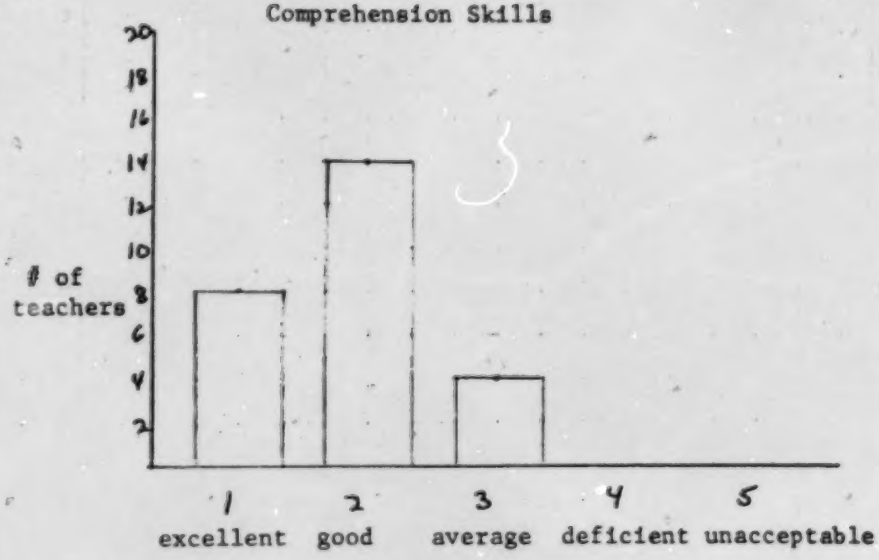
Chart 8-B

6th grade
Teacher Evaluation

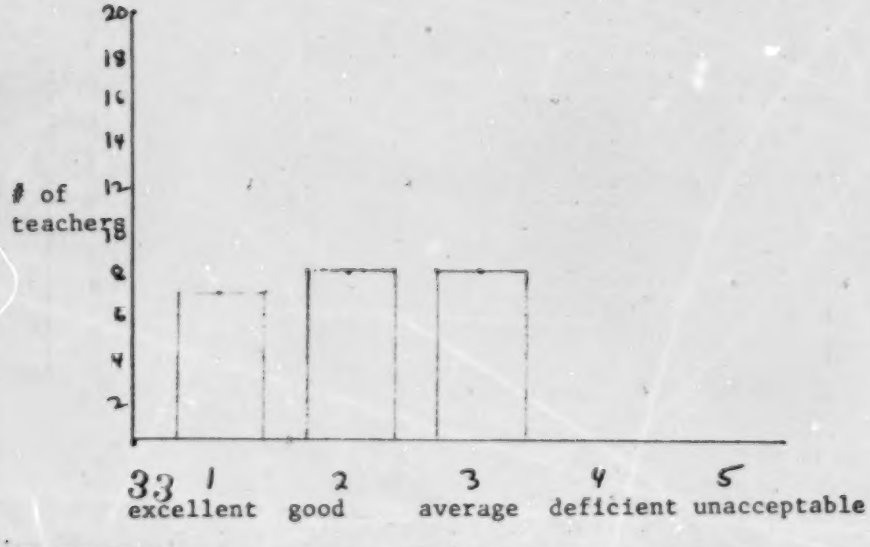
Other Language Skills
(e.g., sentence structure)



Comprehension Skills



Study Skills



Glossary Usefulness

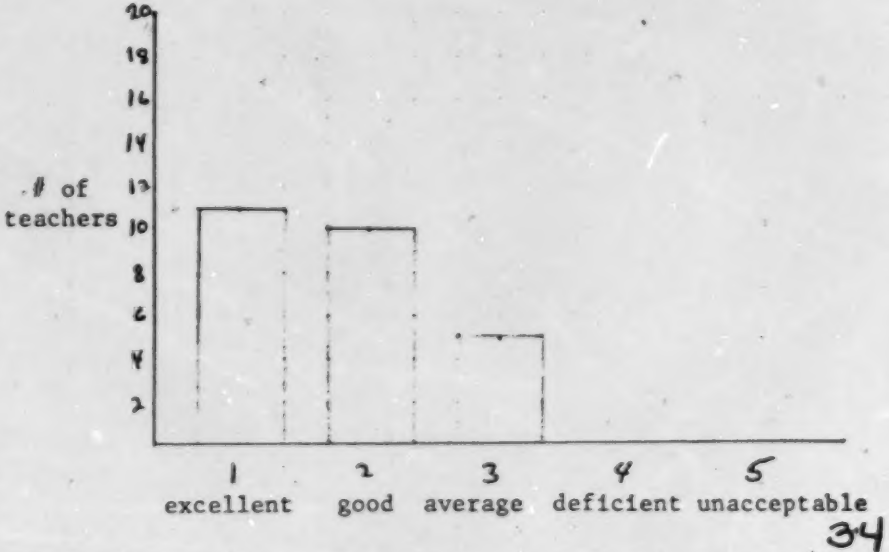


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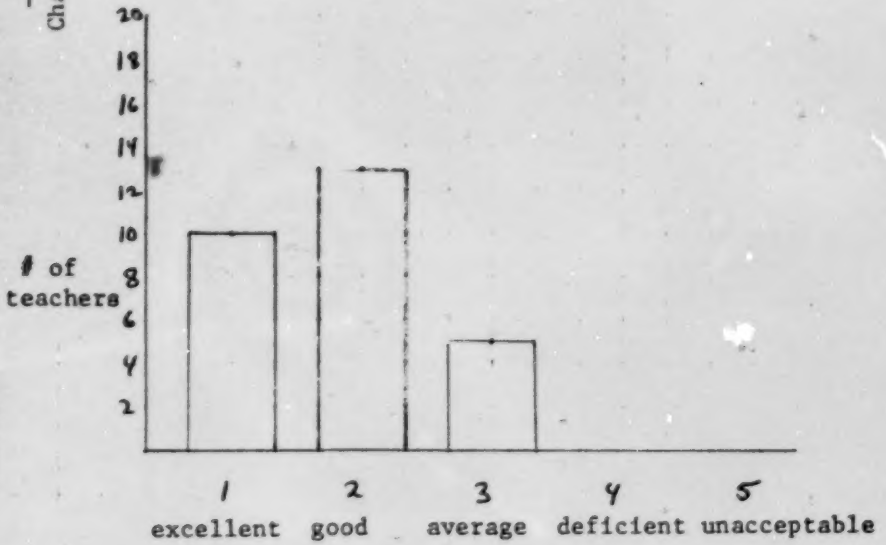
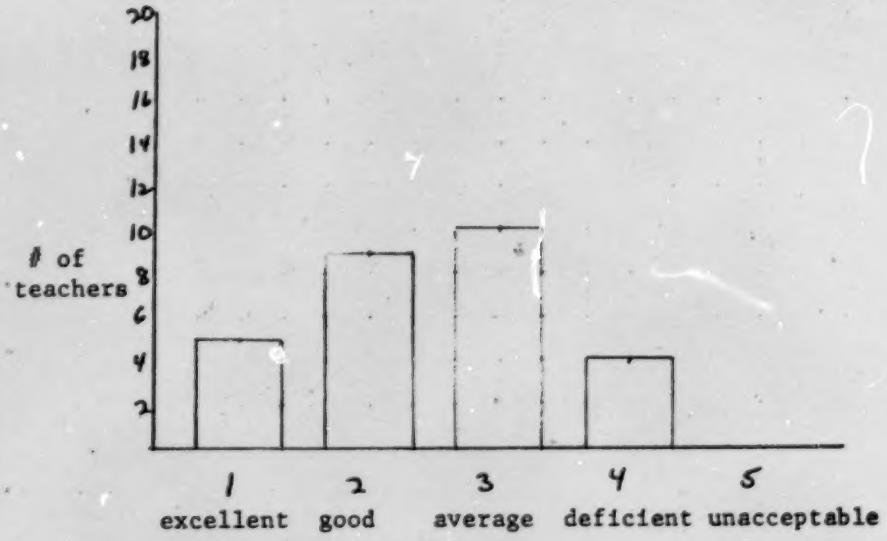
Chart 8-C

6th grade
Teacher Evaluation

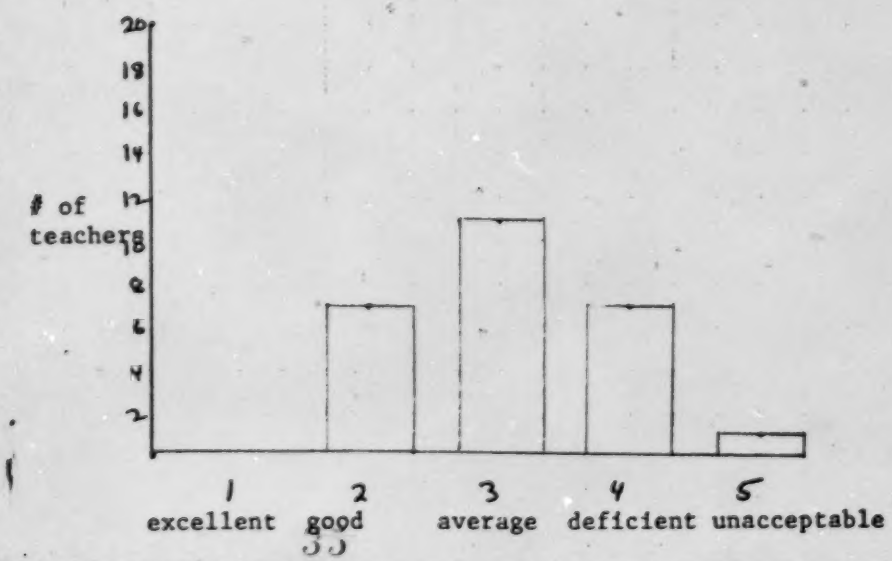
Practice Activities



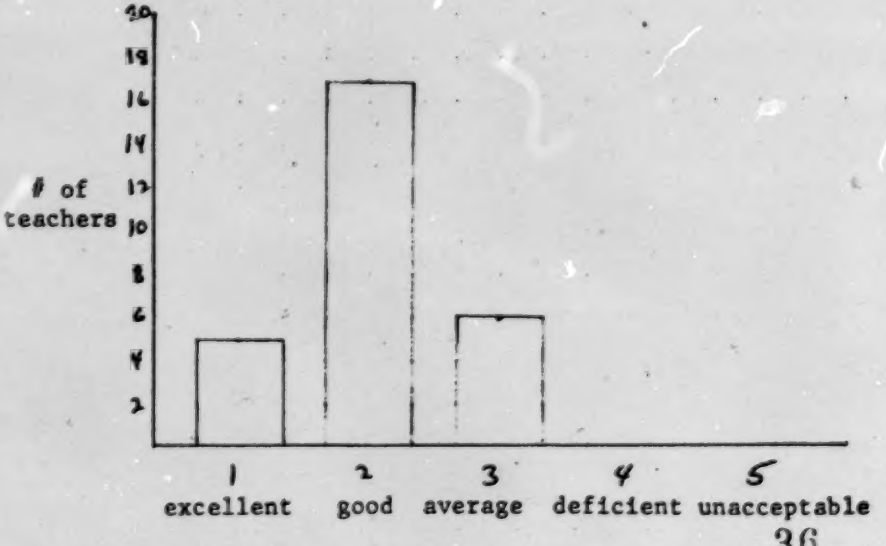
Individualization Provisions



For Slow Pupils



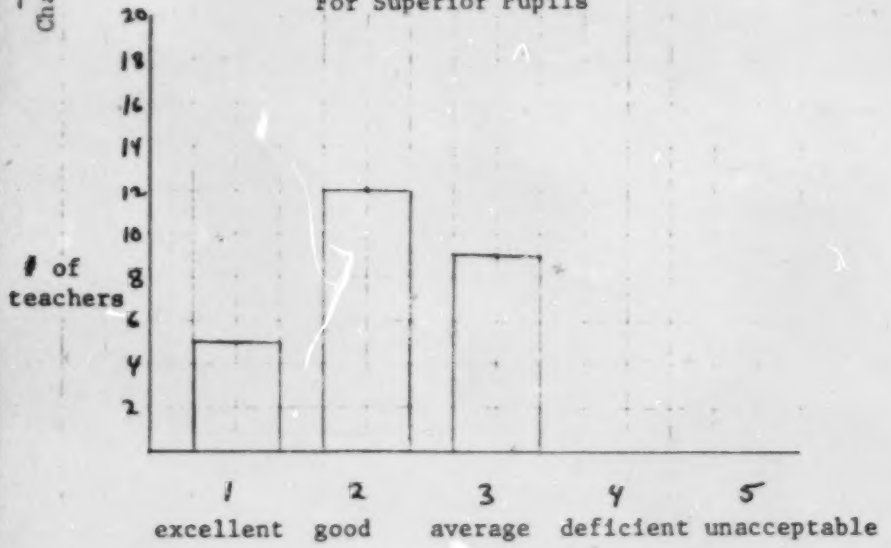
For Average Pupils



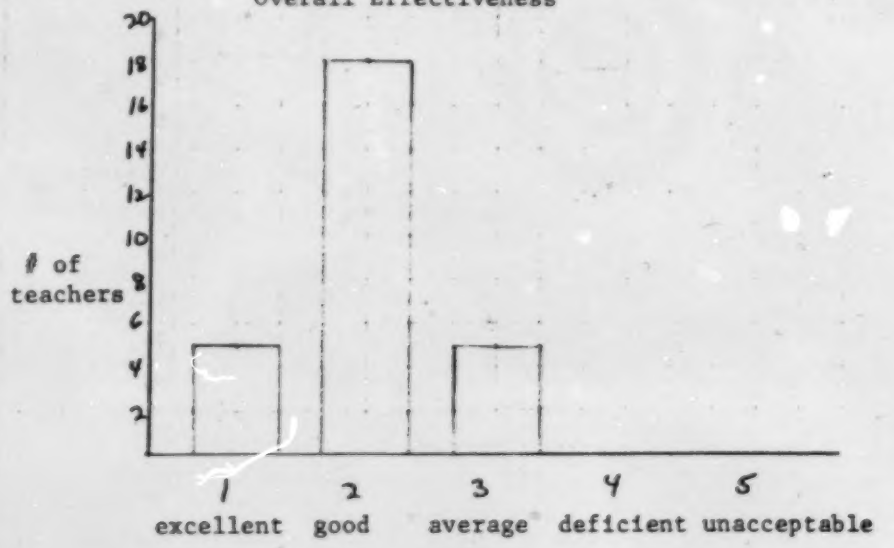
-22-
Chart 8-D

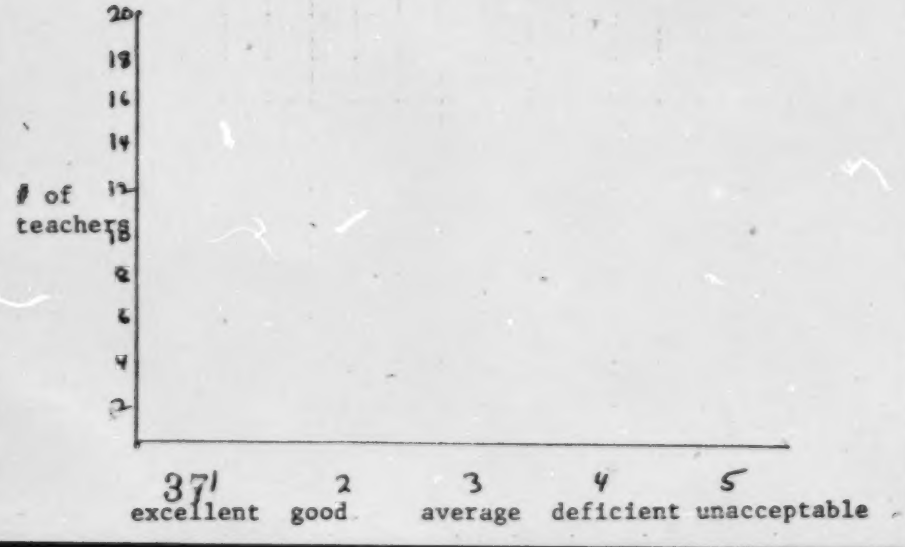
6th grade
Teacher Evaluation

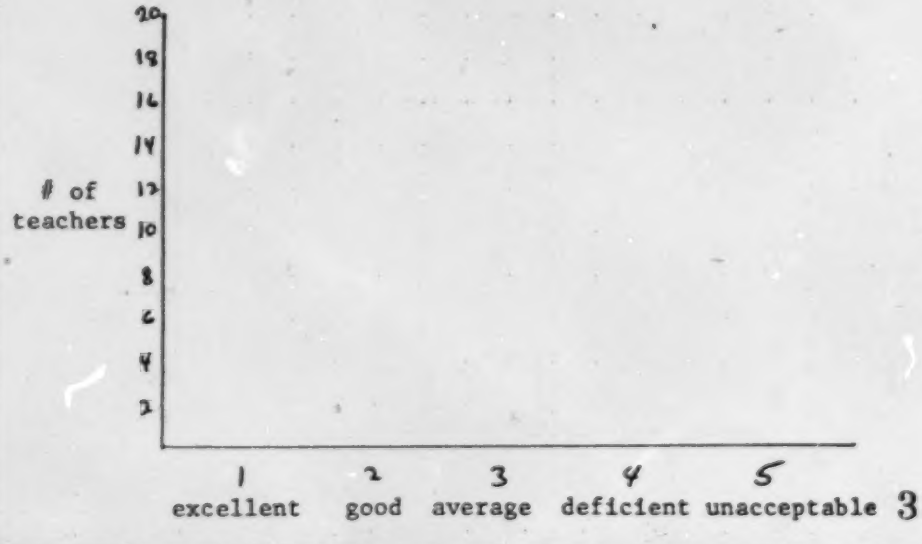
For Superior Pupils



Overall Effectiveness







The three classes where the changes in skills test scores were small were located in two small towns (one of which is a suburb) and one large city. In all cases the pre-test scores of this group were higher than normal. Two out of the three trial teachers of small-change classrooms regularly used Harper & Row reading materials (while in the large-improvement group a wide variety of texts had been used). Again the students demonstrated no discernible difference on the comprehension test but did display a greater liking for the stories than typical of the whole group.

A geographic breakdown into regions of the United States of the "Overall Effectiveness" rating showed no difference from one region to another.

Tallying the "Overall Effectiveness" rating by previous Harper & Row user versus nonuser showed no difference in rating.

Of the 63 participating teachers, 54 responded to the question, "The lesson plan length in the Teacher's Guide was: too long; too short; just right." In response, 22 said it was too long, 2 said it was too short, and 30 said it was just right. This indicated to the editors that the final teacher's guide should make it very clear that teachers should make judgments of what should be taught from the lesson plan and should not feel the need to teach all of a lesson every time or in one day.

SUMMARY

The objective of this study, as stated earlier in this report, was "to check on the skills-teaching techniques used in the program and to provide our contributors and editors with feedback on the efficacy of those techniques." A pre- and post-test procedure used with well over a thousand students provided strong statistical evidence that reading-skills learning was taking place in classrooms using the materials and procedures of *Reading Basics Plus*. Tests also provided evidence of student comprehension of the selections at the appropriate designated levels. No major weakness in the skills or comprehension material was revealed, and no major revision of the material was therefore made.

In addition, teacher reactions to *Reading Basics Plus* were very positive but did demonstrate a need for further information in the teacher's guide regarding lesson length and techniques to use with slow or superior pupils (i.e., the use of Harper & Row materials other than those used in the learner verification trials.)

PERSON TO CONTACT FOR CLARIFICATION, MORE DETAIL, OR UPDATED INFORMATION:

Mr. Edward H. Ball, Director of Research
Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.
School Department
10 East 53rd Street
New York, New York 10022
Telephone : 212- 593-7404